

PRIORITY

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FROM : Amembassy, BONN

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

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SUBJECT: Conversation with Dr. Krone, Chairman of the CDU Bundestag Faction, on the Berlin Situation and Other Matters. (Embtel 1078 to Dept.)

On November 20, 1958, Dr. Krone and his assistant in managing CDU Bundestag Faction affairs, Will Rasner, discussed at length with Embassy officers, the Berlin situation and various other matters. It was clear from Krone's manner that he was profoundly moved and disturbed by the Berlin situation, which he indicated he believed to be the most serious development in Germany since the time of the Berlin air lift. He spoke slowly, carefully and with deep emotion about the Berlin situation and the crucial decisions now facing the Western powers and West Germany. Throughout the conversation Rasner, usually a very talkative man, was respectful and deferential to Krone, generally leaving it to him to express the CDU's views on the subjects discussed. Dr. Krone occasionally turned to Rasner asking if he did not agree, which Rasner invariably did while occasionally adding a comment of his own.

On the Berlin Situation.

It was clear from his general manner that Dr. Krone was deeply concerned and worried about the Soviet threats to the status of Berlin. He said that it was clearly the Soviet goal to force the Western powers and the Federal Republic to recognize the GDR, and by this and other means to build up the GDR in such a way that it would eventually play a decisive role in German reunification. Discussing what should be done, Krone said that all possible circumstances could, of course, not be foreseen, but prudence required that possible courses of action be considered carefully in advance. He stressed emphatically, repeating it several times, that there must be no dealing by the Western powers with any representative of the GDR, and no yielding whatsoever to the challenge of the Western powers' right of access to Berlin. He and Vockel, the Federal Government's representative in Berlin (an old friend of his, who had just come to Bonn to express his views), had always believed that it had been a mistake in 1948 to resort to an air lift instead of insisting on maintaining access by land. Now a decision even more fundamental had to be taken, with the question of recognition of the GDR at stake. Krone emphasized that if the de facto right of the GDR to control land traffic should be conceded now, within a short time the GDR would be insisting on controlling the air as well; therefore, an air

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lift would be no solution but only a postponement of the problem. While avoiding any recommendation to use force to keep open the land routes to Berlin, he stated emphatically that the Western powers should at all costs avoid showing their papers to GDR officials and should make no concession whatsoever if confronted by such officials at the border. There should also be no question of trains or military convoys turning back if met by GDR officials at the border. If the Western powers should make the mistake of showing their papers to GDR representatives, no doubt the GDR would at first move cautiously, not making any difficulties; but once their authority was established, the Western powers would be helpless in their hands.

Speaking of the effect in West Germany if the West should show the slightest inclination to compromise in the direction of dealing with GDR representatives, Krone said elements in the Federal Republic, - certain elements in the SPD and newspapermen such as Augstein of der Spiegel and Sethe of die Welt, - who were prepared to deal with the GDR would be strengthened to a dangerous extent. Sethe and others would immediately say that he and those who thought as he did had been right all along: even the West was dealing with Pankow, only Adenauer was so stupid as not to do so, etc. In this fashion there would be a dangerous strengthening of all of those who advocate dealing with Pankow if necessary to get reunification and a dangerous weakening and embarrassment for the Chancellor and his loyal supporters and all they stood for. For the Western powers to weaken under Soviet and GDR pressure on this issue would make a laughing stock of the firm position Chancellor Adenauer had maintained all these years, and would have the effect of destroying confidence in the steadfastness and reliability of the United States and the Western powers.

Acknowledging that the Federal Republic of necessity has technical contacts with GDR technical officials about such matters as railway time tables, canal traffic, interzonal trade, etc., Krone stated emphatically that it would be an entirely different matter, after the Soviets had formally announced that their control authority was being transferred to the GDR, for the Western powers to subject their legal right of access to Berlin to GDR control. This would amount in effect to the Western powers conceding that the GDR has assumed these responsibilities and is a government able to assume them; and it would be widely interpreted as leading inevitably to full recognition of the GDR. For the Western powers to do this would be a fateful turning point, causing widespread doubt about future United States and Western policy.

Emphasizing the seriousness with which the CDU Bundestag faction as a whole regarded the Russian move against Berlin, Krone stressed that the faction last week had unanimously approved Gerstenmaier's statement that the Soviet actions threatened the basis of German-Soviet relations. He indicated that if the Soviets went too far, the CDU would be prepared to break off diplomatic relations with the USSR. Speculating on the reasons for the timing of the Russian step, Krone said the Soviets may have noted the tendency in certain quarters in the

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SPD and elsewhere to "soften" regarding relations with the GDR, and that this might have been a factor in the situation. The Soviets may have thought that the division of opinion in the Federal Republic could be exploited to bring about a general softening of attitude toward the GDR.

Krone expressed interest in our estimate as to whether the Soviets would confront the Western powers with definite acts, or alternatively with proposals to be discussed. It seemed not unlikely to him that the Russians might be interested in Four Power negotiations on the future of Berlin; he thought it possible that the Soviets might accept the Four Power Commission proposals made in the West German note of November 17, and insist that Berlin be the first aspect of the German problem to be discussed in the Commission.

Regarding the situation in Berlin Krone contrasted the atmosphere and mood of Berlin at the time of the 1946 air lift with the present mood. In 1948 no one in Berlin had forgotten the war, and all were desperately poor and had nothing to lose. Now Berlin is relatively prosperous, and the population has felt relatively secure for some time; and the Russian moves, therefore, have come as a profound shock.

Discussing the subject of possible economic countermeasures against the GDR, and what the attitudes of German business would be, Krone indicated that from a political standpoint he did not think much of German businessmen. They had, for example, in the 1930's supported Hitler. German businessmen might or might not like economic countermeasures against the GDR, but what they thought really did not matter. If the Government should decide to take countermeasures in support of Berlin and the allied position in Berlin, the political parties and the public would support this and German businessmen would have to go along whatever they thought. Krone doubted, however, that there were economic countermeasures of sufficient force to deter the Soviets from pursuing an important political objective.

Krone was asked his opinion as to what the reaction would be if it turned out that the Russian moves were directed exclusively against the Allies in West Berlin and not against West German traffic and contact with West Berlin; would there not be a danger of a divergence of view growing between the Allies and West Germany? He replied that the Soviets would have no chance whatsoever of driving a wedge in this fashion between the Germans and the Western powers. He was certain there would be absolute solidarity, that German opinion would support the United States and its Allies wholeheartedly in whatever steps they take to stay in Berlin regardless of what form the threat to Berlin may take.

On the German Note of November 17 to the USSR.

Referring to the German note to the USSR on the Four Power Commission, Krone indicated that he was quite pleased with the way it had finally come out, with

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All parties in the Bundestag approving its wording despite the fact that, contrary to the original position of the SPD and FDP, it mentioned reunification as a subject the Commission should deal with. He mentioned the good work which Kiesinger and Gradl had done in the Foreign Affairs Committee and other inter-party discussions, in winning opposition approval of reunification as one of the tasks of the Commission. The Bundestag resolution of July 2, he pointed out, had been much too vague; and the October 1 Berlin resolution, which had included much opposition phraseology in order to achieve its unanimous passage, had also been too nebulous. Kiesinger and Gradl had done well to get the FDP and SPD in the end to support the note as it was finally worded. Discussing the meaning of the note, Krone said it called in effect for three principal themes of discussion: (1) German reunification; (2) the peace treaty, if the Soviets so desire; and (3) anything else which the Soviets might wish to bring up. He said that the Chancellor himself had had a hand in drafting the final wording of the text, particularly with respect to including the idea that all parties could bring up in the Commission anything they wished.

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... inter-party cooperation, and technical contacts with the GDR. ...
... the subject of inter-party cooperation, to which Lemmer and Gradl had devoted so much effort in September, Krone said that the CDU had attempted, and succeeded, in bringing about a united front among the parties in the Zone and the Bundestag session in Berlin vis a vis the GDR, conditions in the Zone and the refugee situation. The CDU purpose was to demonstrate German unity of attitude regarding the hardships imposed on the population of the East zone by the GDR, and to demonstrate that the parties were united in refusing to deal politically with the GDR. Although the whole idea was nearly shattered by the SPD motion for an "inner German office" to deal with Pankow, in the end a united front was maintained. The October 1 debate went smoothly and a unanimous resolution had been passed. He pointed out that the CDU had gone so far as to accept sentences and paragraphs from opposition motions for inclusion in the October 1 Bundestag resolution in order to buy party unity.

Asked about Lemmer's informal committee of one or two leaders from each party (which had played a role in September and which Lemmer and Gradl hoped to use regularly in order to bring about cooperation between the parties particularly in "all German" matters), Krone said this committee had ceased to exist. The idea of seeking interparty cooperation was useful; but it was necessary to make it absolutely clear that there are limits beyond which the CDU will not go in any effort to bring about interparty unity. As the Chancellor had indicated, the important thing is not to have a joint or united policy but to have a "right" policy.

Regarding the desire of the SPD and FDP, and some in the CDU, to "coordinate" technical contacts with the GDR, Krone stressed that it is important that existing technical contacts not be coordinated, and that they should be left in the

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separate ministries exactly as they are now. He felt that these necessary technical contacts function as well as they do precisely because they are not made matters of political importance, and are not "coordinated" or played up in any other way.

On the Schaeffler Case.

When the subject of Minister of Justice Schaeffer's conversations in East Berlin in 1956 with the Soviet Ambassador to the GDR and high GDR officials was mentioned, Krone was distinctly embarrassed, and indicated that he felt so strongly on the subject that he preferred not to talk about it.

On de Gaulle's Visit to Adenauer.

Krone expressed great satisfaction that de Gaulle would be visiting the Chancellor the following week, stressing how important he believed it is that France and Western Germany have the closest and most friendly relations. The Chancellor had been much impressed by de Gaulle at their last meeting; and it was most satisfactory that de Gaulle is now being so courteous as to return the Chancellor's visit at this time.

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On the German's Visit to Bonn

Krone expressed great satisfaction that de Gaulle would be visiting Bonn. He stressed the importance of the visit and the fact that it was the first time a German Chancellor had visited Bonn since 1963. He also mentioned that the visit was being held in Bonn, which was a very important city for Germany.

On the Free Trade Area.

Asked about German attitudes regarding the current breakdown in the FTA negotiations, Krone commented only that the Chancellor has recently said that the time has now come for this matter to be dealt with "by the politicians rather than by economic experts".

For the Ambassador:

William R. Tyler

William R. Tyler
Counselor of Embassy

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